

# COMMUNITY HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

*Chaired by Council Member Golden*

**June 9, 2015 – 10:00 a.m.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Lobby Conference Room (Fish Bowl)**

## MINUTES

### **Present:**

Committee Chair Jeff Golden and Committee Member Chris Williams

### **Absent:**

Committee Members Latimer Alexander and Jason Ewing

### **Also Present:**

Council Member C. Davis

### **Staff Present:**

Greg Demko, City Manager; Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Mike McNair, Director of Community Development; Richard Fuqua, Affordable Housing Manager; Alisha Doulen, Community Resource Specialist; Major Larry Casterline, Police Department; Wendy Fuscoe, Core City Administrator; Jeron Hollis, Communications Officer; Major Larry Casterline, High Point Police Department; Ed Brown, Inspections Administrator; Katherine Bossi, Code Enforcement Supervisor; Tom Tricot, GIS Manager; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Tom Vincent, Deputy City Clerk; Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

### **Others Present:**

Gene Brown, Community Housing Solutions; Bill McNeil, McNeil Planning Solutions; Sharon Armfield, Sharon Burgos, Rosanne Martin, Jerry Mingo, Jennifer Younger, Citizens.

**Media Present:** Pat Kimbrough, *High Point Enterprise*; Jordan Green, *Triad City Beat*

### **Community Housing Solutions (Southside) Contract**

*Mike McNair, Director of Community Development and Housing, addressed the committee concerning a new contract to be considered for home construction with Community Housing Solutions. He said the properties will be for lease/purchase and the contract is in the amount of \$287,038 to build the two properties and the City will retain ownership of the properties until they are sold. Mr. McNair shared a master plan of the site and the designs of the houses.*

*Gene Brown, Executive Director of Community Housing Solutions, gave a brief history of the company. He explained they were a standalone non-profit corporation that has been active in Greensboro and is now expanding out into Guilford County. Mr. Brown gave an overview of the company's certifications and qualifications. He said the company has a home repair program and a home ownership program. Mr. Brown explained their new construction program is not in competition with Habitat for Humanity. He also noted the two homes in Southside would be the first two homes built in High Point. He gave an*

*overview of last year's repair projects, highlighted the company's relationships with volunteer groups and shared some before and after photos of their projects.*

*Deputy City Manager, Randy McCaslin, asked where they receive the majority of their funding. Mr. Brown stated that about 35% was from businesses or employers; about 25% to 30% comes from government entities such as the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency. They also receive money from philanthropic foundations, civic groups and faith organizations. Mr. Brown noted the residents pay a percentage based on their income. Committee Member Williams asked about the duration of the homeowner's class and Mr. Brown said HUD requires a minimum 8-hour course, but someone could work with them for up to two years. Mr. McNair shared that the City has two upcoming classes for first time homebuyers and explained the screening process for the City's lease-purchase program.*

*Mr. McCaslin pointed out the contract with Community Housing Solutions for the construction of these two houses are on the agenda for the Finance Committee (June 11) and the Council Meeting (June 15).*

### **Update on Meredith Street Apartments**

*Katherine Bossi, Code Enforcement Supervisor, distributed a map of the subject property. She reported that staff inspected the property the week of May 18<sup>th</sup> and gained access to buildings 513, 515, 1701 Leonard and 1703 Leonard. Ms. Bossi said the complaint and notice of hearing letters have been issued to the property owner. The hearing date with staff is on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. She explained at that meeting they will more than likely issue an order to repair or demolish the structure and the owner will have 90 days to comply. If the property owner does not make the repairs or demolish the buildings, staff will bring an Ordinance to Demolish to Council. Deputy City Manager Randy McCaslin said the reason these four properties were not included with the prior demolitions was because the owner had repaired them and they were not in a condition to demolish. Ms. Bossi said 513 Meredith qualified to be demolished since it has not been repaired. She noted 515 Meredith was initially repaired in 2013 and rented for brief period of time, but is now standing open and has been vandalized. Ms. Bossi explained 1701 and 1703 Leonard had no previous enforcement actions on them, but had been left open and had no plumbing or electrical systems and had holes in the walls and floors.*

*Committee Chair Golden inquired what the time frame might be for the demolition of the buildings on Leonard. Ms. Bossi said after the compliance date passes, staff will bring an Ordinance to Demolish to Council and then there will be a bidding process for the demolition and asbestos removal. Mr. McCaslin noted it is typically about sixty days after Council takes action. Ms. Bossi pointed out the high grass left behind after the apartments were demolished has been dealt with and if the trash is not removed the City will send a contractor to remove it. She added there is also an order to secure the buildings and the City will do that if the property owner does not.*

### **Report on the City of Greensboro's Rental Housing Inspection Program**

*Bill McNeil of McNeil Planning Solutions made a presentation on how Greensboro conducts its rental code enforcement inspections. He said this could be a framework for thinking strategically about how High Point may want to consider any changes to its housing code and inspections programs. Greensboro's Rental Unit Certificate of Occupancy (RUCO) program was created in 2003 and the intent was to have every rental unit in the City inspected on a periodic basis. It was later changed to an annual sampling and was administered by the City's Engineering and Inspections Department. Mr. McNeil said the statute enabling these inspections was amended to require there to be a "reasonable*

cause” before an inspection could be done. The statute also allowed targeted inspections in designated areas. He said Greensboro developed a study committee and in 2013 the City Council adopted their recommendations which included stronger penalties for non-compliance and speeded up enforcement. Mr. McNeil noted that HB 530 (currently in committee) would further restrict what periodic code enforcement programs could do. Committee Chair Golden asked if the Committee could get a copy of Greensboro’s fee schedule. Mr. McNeil said that could be provided.

City Manager Greg Demko asked if this Committee was interested in having a program that incorporates this type of strategy. Committee Chair Golden said he thought this is the direction they would like to move in acknowledging that it would take some time.

### **Report on Reclaiming Vacant Properties (Detroit) Conference**

Mike McNair, Director of Community Development, reported that he and the Community Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee traveled to Detroit last month to attend the “Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference.” Topics were focused on land banking and code enforcement. Mr. McNair shared rates of distressed properties and the scale of blight for different cities and also examples of remedies tried by different cities.

Mr. McNair advised the Committee that he would like to develop a pilot program in High Point to identify blighted or distressed properties in the Core City and make recommendations on the appropriate actions for rehabilitation. He would like to be able to present a plan to the City Manager by the end of this calendar year on some near-final products, startup costs, equipment requirements and fiscal impacts.

### **Demonstration on the Core City Mapping Project**

Mike McNair, Director of Community Development and Housing, said he, Tom Tricot (GIS Manager) and Bill McNeil (McNeil Planning Solutions) have been working on trying to see what a GIS mapping project would look like for the City of High Point. He explained for demonstration purposes they took four pieces of available data: record of no electric bills, tax delinquencies, empty properties and current liens. Mr. McNair showed several examples of this data across several different neighborhoods. Deputy City Manager Randy McCaslin asked if Mr. McNair was proposing to work with UNC-G to come up with an overall plan. Mr. McNair said UNC-G was proposing to work with the City and anticipate a three to four month process. City Manager Greg Demko said this would be a key element in building the strategic plan for next year.

### **Discussion on Dog Tethering**

Committee Chair Golden reported that he had asked Committee members to bring in their ideas on this issue so the Committee could formulate a plan and see how they wanted to tackle it. He said no matter what Council decides, they need to look at the timeline so they can give the community time to adjust. Mr. Golden also wanted to know how the City was going to get the word out about a new ordinance. Council Member Cynthia Davis shared an anti-dog tethering flyer Council recently received and suggested there should be a grace period for first offenders. She asked Major Casterline what he thought a good grace period would be and he replied a minimum of six months. He added the Police Department could leave door hangers to address folks who are in violation. Committee Member Williams said some low-income families use their dogs more as security than a pet and he hoped to find information on programs to help people house and safely secure their animals. Sharon Burgos, a

*citizen, said she could provide information about organizations that could help with putting up fencing. Major Casterline said that most of the people that keep their dogs tethered are in the City's poorest communities and 70% to 80% of them rent so they might not have the ability or leeway to put up fencing at their home. Committee Chair Golden said the cost of additional staff may have to be considered if an ordinance is put in place.*

*Committee Chair Golden said he felt at this point the Council as a whole should get together and start to formulate what they want the ordinance to look like. Mr. Golden suggested the next Community Housing and Neighborhood Development (July 14) should be a meeting of the Committee as a Whole (the entire City Council) with the main topic being the dog tethering ordinance. No objections were voiced.*

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. upon motion duly made and seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jeffrey Golden, Chairman

Attest:

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Lisa B. Vierling, MMC  
City Clerk